

#199: AUGUST 12–SEPTEMBER 8, 2014 **A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE**

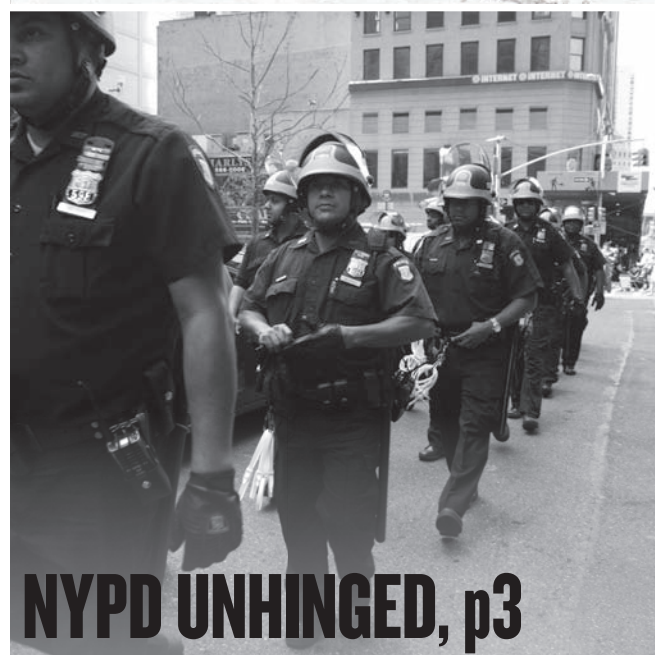
THE INDYPENDENT



MAY DAY FOR THE PLANET

CLIMATE CHANGE RESISTANCE COMES TO BUSHWICK, p4

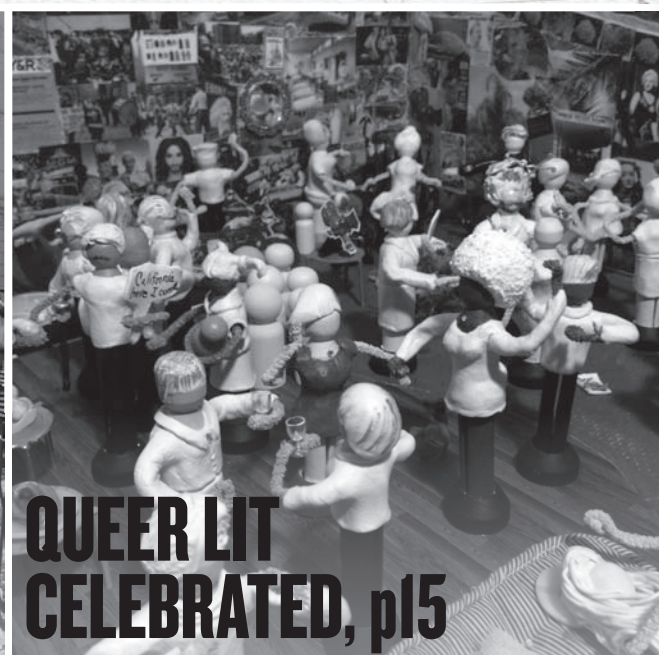
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The Independent is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and online audience of more than 100,000 readers. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Independent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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community calendar

MONDAYS THRU AUG 25

7pm • \$20
PLAY: *BROWNSVILLE BRED*. This award-winning one-woman play, written, performed and lived by Elaine Del Valle, portrays Brooklyn from a child's perspective.
Nuyorican Poets Café
236 E 3rd St
212-505-8183 • brownsvillebred.org

THUR AUG 14 THRU SUN NOV 9

Various times • \$8
EXHIBITION: "A/WAKE IN THE WATER." "a/wake in the water: Meditations on Disaster" explores and exposes the effects, repercussions and systematic neglect Black communities experience as the result of environmental hazards and natural disasters. Includes film, video footage, reenactments and narratives. Opening party Thurs. Aug. 14, 7-10pm.
MoCADA
80 Hanson Pl, Bklyn
718-230-0492 • mocada.org

FRI AUG 15 THRU THUR AUG 28

DIRECTOR RETROSPECTIVE FILM SERIES: CHRIS MARKER. French multimedia artist and cinema poet Chris Marker explores time, time travel, memory, political upheaval and Marxism through alternative realities. The retrospective spans from the late 1950s through the early 1990s and includes over fifteen films, all of which contain English subtitles. See calendar at bam.org for show times and pricing.
BAMcinémathèque
30 Lafayette Ave, Bklyn
718-636-4100 • bam.org

Broken Cameras, Budrus and Where Should the Birds Fly. Discussion to follow.

Bluestockings Bookstore & Café
172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

SAT AUG 16

6–11:30pm • \$15
FESTIVAL: DISSIDENT ARTS FESTIVAL 2014. The 9th annual Dissident Arts Festival is a celebration and showcase of radical arts and movement culture. Enjoy revolutionary Free Jazz, New Music, World Sounds, and Radical Poetry, Performance Art and Film in conjunction with the 35th anniversary of the El Taller Latino Americano cultural space.
El Taller Latino Americano
2710 Broadway at 104th St
212-665-9460 • dissidentarts.com

MON AUG 18

7pm • Free
POETRY READING: #GROWFIERCE. The #GrowFierce reading series, featuring New York-based emerging women poets, continues. The poets, alumni of the Digging Deep, Facing Self workshop, will read their work, presenting stories of blossoming gardens, poetic switch blades, roller skates, star dust, open veins and more.
Bluestockings Bookstore & Café
172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

WED AUG 20

7pm • Free
DISCUSSION: CLIMATE CHANGE, THE HARD PROBLEM. Philip Kitcher,

212-691-3345 • revolutionbooksnyc.org

THURS AUG 21

7pm • Free
PEOPLE'S CLIMATE ART: SPORATORIUM. Want to get involved in making art for the September 21 People's Climate March? Many of the coolest and most creative groups (see page 6 for more details) will be meeting and making magic happen.
Mayday Space
214 Starr St, 2nd Fl, Bklyn
peoplesclimatearts.tumblr.com

THUR AUG 21

7pm • Free
POETRY READING: POETS AFTER PRIDE. Accomplished New York-based poets, including Stephen Boyer, Saeed Jones, Timothy Liu, Lonely Christopher and Robert Siek, will be reading their work during an evening of LGBT poetry.
McNally Jackson Books
52 Prince St
212-274-1160 • mcnallyjackson.com

SAT AUG 23 THRU SUN AUG 24

3–7pm • Free
MUSIC: CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL. Assembling some of the finest jazz musicians around for this annual two-day ode to Charlie Parker, this festival will feature Kenny Barron, Lionel Loueke and Cindy Blackman Santana. The action will be in two neighborhoods where Parker lived, Harlem and Losaida. Saturday's performances are at Marcus Garvey Park and Sunday's at Tompkins Square Park.
cityparksfoundation.org

writer Sapphire, author of *Push*, will lead. After-party at Fort Greene's Greenlight Bookstore to follow.
Fort Greene Park, Bklyn
718-398-2883 • nywriterscoalition.org

MON SEPT 1

Starts 11am • Free
PARADE: WEST INDIAN AMERICAN LABOR DAY. Celebrate Caribbean culture with hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who come out annually to enjoy one of the city's biggest and most raucous parades.
Eastern Pkwy, Bklyn
wiadcarnival.org

FRI SEPT 5

7pm • Free
FORUM: WHICH WAY FORWARD: CLIMATE CHAOS OR CLIMATE JUSTICE? Ahead of the People's Climate March on September 21, the Brooklyn for Peace Climate Action Committee will be hosting a forum focusing on a people-based solution to climate change. Speakers include noted climate, environment and labor experts Sean Sweeney, Michael Klare, Janet Redman and JJ Johnson.
Memorial Presbyterian Church
186 St Johns Pl, Bklyn
718-624-5921 • brooklynpeace.org

SUN SEPT 7

12–6pm • Free
CELEBRATION: BED-STUY PRIDE. The Audre Lorde Project's Safe OUTside the System's (SOS) Collective will host the 4th annual Bed-Stuy Pride, celebrating the neighborhood's LGBT members and promoting community-based strategies to combat hate. The day will feature community art, music, vendors, performances, family-friendly activities and more.
Herbert Von King Park
670 Lafayette Ave, Bklyn
718-596-0342 • alp.org

TUES SEPT 9: MILESTONE

The Independent will celebrate its 14th anniversary and its 200th issue with a People's Climate March special edition. We will do an expanded press run and will circulate this issue widely throughout the city. To help with distribution, email contact@indypendent.org. For more, see page 7.

SAT SEPT 13

11am–1pm • Free
RECREATION: SUMMER FISHING CLINIC. Enjoy the Lower East Side Ecology Center's last catch-and-release fishing clinic of the year. You're welcome to bring your own fishing gear and kids are encouraged to attend. Space is limited, so register online.
Solar 1
E 20th St & East River
212-477-4022 • leseecologycenter.org



PALESTINE IN OUR HEARTS: Bluestockings will screen films this month about Israel's occupation of Palestine.

SAT AUG 16

7pm • Free
FILM: PALESTINE SOLIDARITY SCREENINGS. How can those of us who are in the United States act in solidarity with Palestinians? Bluestockings will screen films about Israel's occupation of Palestine, including *Five*

professor of philosophy at Columbia University, will discuss the causes and consequences of climate change and the path forward, including the actions we can take to minimize and address the situation.
Revolution Bookstore
146 W 26th St

SAT AUG 23

2pm • Free
LITFEST: FORT GREENE PARK SUMMER LITERARY FESTIVAL. This 10th anniversary of the New York Writers Coalition's summer festival will bring youth and established writers to read their work in the park. New York-based

What’s a Cop to Do?

By Steven Wishnia

It’s barely a 10-minute walk from the ferry, but Staten Island’s Tompkinsville feels like it’s in a different city from glitzy Manhattan or trendy Brooklyn. There are a few new luxury buildings on the waterfront, but the neighborhood is primarily working-class and poor, and far more multiethnic than the borough’s suburban stereotype. Amid the cell-phone and 99-cent stores on Bay Street and Victory Boulevard are Mexican bodegas, Trinidadian and Sri Lankan restaurants, an old white man’s hardware store and a place to wire money to Africa. There’s also a hip-hop recording studio and the borough’s only surviving independent bookstore. Tompkinsville Park is a slim triangle populated largely by drunks.

On July 17, two of the drunks got into a fight, and Eric Garner, a large 43-year-old father of six partially disabled by asthma, broke it up, according to people in the neighborhood. The combatants were gone by the time the police came, so they decided to arrest Garner, who sold loose cigarettes on the block. The rest became the most notorious home video since the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1991: When Garner got vexed, the cops grabbed him from behind, choked him and threw him to the ground, one pinning his head to the sidewalk while he moaned “I can’t breathe.” On Aug. 1, the city medical examiner’s office announced it had ruled his death a homicide, that he had been killed by compression of the neck and chest — in other words, because he couldn’t breathe while being choked and pinned.

A LONG HISTORY

The killing is the latest in a depressing four-decade litany, from 10-year-old Clifford Glover in 1973 to African immigrant Amadou Diallo in 1999 to 18-year-old Ramarley Graham in 2012, that reads like a local version of Linton Kwesi Johnson’s poem “Liesense Fi Kill.” In the city’s most publicized cases of police killing civilians, only one officer has gone to prison: Francis Livoti, who strangled 29-year-old Anthony Baez after he accidentally hit Livoti’s car with a football in the Bronx in 1994. Any perceived threat has been grounds for acquittal: The cop who shot Glover got off after claiming that the Queens fourth-grader had

“made a reaching motion.”

The deeper issue is that the United States responded to the crime waves of the 1960s through the 1990s essentially by declaring war on black men, treating them as criminal suspects. The number of prisoners exploded from less than 500,000 in the 1970s to more than 2 million by the late ’90s, fueled by mandatory minimum sentences and a tenfold increase in incarcerated drug offenders. This is compounded by common police attitudes: that they are the “thin blue line” protecting the decent people of society, and allowing any disrespect for their authority will let the thugs through to rampage.

The left and left-liberals haven’t handled the issue well either. They’ve focused on the racism of police practices, mass incarceration and law-and-order politics while largely ignoring people’s legitimate fears. Leftists regularly call for abolishing the prison-industrial complex (or abolishing prisons entirely) without articulating a clear idea of how they’d deal with violent crime. That leaves the issue as rightwing property.

CRIME VICTIMS

The reality is that the people most likely to be the victims of crime are those living in poor black or Latino neighborhoods. People in these areas are often vehemently ambivalent. They don’t want to live fearing a push-in robbery whenever they unlock their doors or to have to go by a knot of teenage crack dealers with pit bulls and baseball bats to go food shopping, but they also don’t want to live in a police state where their young men are regularly stopped, shoved around and verbally abused. They want to live in a neighborhood where it’s safe for old Puerto Rican men to play dominoes on a card table in front of the bodega, but not one where police haul them off to jail for having an open beer on that table. In pre-Giuliani New York, the unwritten rule was that keeping the bottle in a brown paper bag showed respectful discretion, but from 2001 through 2013, police issued more than 1.5 million summonses for public drinking, almost 300,000 of them in just five precincts, in heavily nonwhite areas like the South Bronx and East New York.

There is a reasonable argument for enforcing

the law against low-level offenses or minor obnoxiousness. Men crudely propositioning women on the street isn’t a felony, but if it happens often enough, women won’t feel safe walking there. The problem comes when this “quality of life” policing is used on behalf of people who feel that the very presence of black and Latino youth signifies crime, as a way to make arrest quotas and satisfy metrics-maniac managers on the backs of blacks, or as a way to push gentrifying neighborhoods to a tipping point where only affluent whites feel welcome.

People on Bay Street say Eric Garner was a peaceful man.

There are also situations where police have to be rough. They can’t exactly say, “Excuse me, Mr. Mugger, could you please put your hands behind your back?” The issue is the use of shoot-first or slam-them-up-against-the-wall tactics against people who aren’t enough of a threat to warrant them, against innocent men like Amadou Diallo, a scared teenager with a bag of weed like Ramarley Graham or literally millions of others.

WHAT GOOD POLICING REQUIRES

In other words, good policing requires judgment, being able to tell the difference between a black teenager in sneakers who’s running because he just snatched a purse and one who’s running because his mother said he had to be home for dinner by 6pm. How? “If the kid who’s running home sees a lady with a stroller or a bag of groceries, he’ll stop,” a Latin musician from East New York told me several years ago. “The one who stole the purse, he don’t give a fuck. He’ll knock her down.”

Good cops, dedicated and skilled ones,

learn how to look for signs of criminal behavior instead of profiling by race, Neill Franklin of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, a former Baltimore city cop and Maryland state trooper, told me in 2012. Police who are “serious about their craft” watch out for the body-language cues that indicate when someone’s carrying a gun or looking to break into parked cars. To search large numbers of people instead of patiently observing to see who the real bad guys are, he said, is both unconstitutional and lazy policing.

As of now, however, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Police Commissioner William Bratton, while talking about retraining police, are defending the policy of arresting large numbers of people for minor offenses. In the first four months of de Blasio’s administration, an average of 80 people a day were busted for marijuana possession, with six out of seven of them black or Latino — almost completely unchanged from the pattern under Michael Bloomberg. This inevitably provokes resentment from those who, like Eric Garner, feel they’re being harassed for nothing, especially when it’s racially skewed. On July 26 in East New York, police were filmed yoking a pregnant woman by the throat in a confrontation that led to her, her husband and her brother facing charges that included disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. The incident began when the family was accused of illegally barbecuing on the street in front of their building.

Steven Wishnia has written about the impact of the war on drugs for The Independent, Alternet, the Daily Beast, and the Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA anthology.



BROKEN STRATEGY: Josmar Trujillo of New Yorkers Against Bratton speaks at a City Hall press conference on the police commissioner’s “broken windows” policy of arresting large numbers of people for minor offenses.

SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND THE INDYPENDENT:

BELOW 14th ST.

- Seward Park Library
192 East Broadway
- Bluestockings
172 Allen St.
- LES People’s Federal Credit Union
39 Avenue B
- Native Bean
50 Avenue A
- Key Food
52 Avenue A
- Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.
- Tompkins Square Library
331 E. 10th St.
- Cinema Village
29 E. 12th St.

- Mamoun’s Falafel Restaurant
22 St. Mark’s Pl.
- Cinema Village
22 E 12th St.
- McNally Jackson Books
52 Prince St.
- Shakespeare & Co.
716 Broadway
- Think Coffee
248 Mercer St.
- Film Forum
209 W. Houston St.

14th TO 96th ST.

- Epiphany Library
228 E. 23rd St.
- Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

- Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & Ninth Ave.
- Columbus Library
942 Tenth Ave.
- Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.
- 96th St. Library
112 E. 96th St.
- ABOVE 96th ST.
- Bloomingdale Library
150 W. 100th St.
- El Barrio Firehouse Community Media Center
175 E. 104th St.
- Aguiar Library
172 E. 110th St.

- Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.
- George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.
- Countee Cullen Library
104 W. 136th St.
- Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.
- Uptown Sister’s Books
W. 156th St. & Amsterdam
- Fort Washington Library
535 W. 179th St.
- BROOKLYN
- Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Pkwy.
- Brooklyn Library
1044 Eastern Pkwy.
- Tea Lounge
Union St. & Seventh Ave.

- Purity Diner
43 Underhill Ave.
- Pacific Street Library
25 Fourth Ave.
- Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.
- YWCA of Brooklyn
30 3rd Ave.
- Wyckoff Starr
30 Wyckoff Ave.
- Kaisa’s Café
146 Bedford Ave.
- Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.
- Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.
- Brooklyn Commons
388 Atlantic Ave.
- Brooklyn Borough Hall
209 Joralemon St.

QUEENS

- Astoria Library
14-01 Astoria Blvd.
- Terraza 7 Live Music
40-19 Gleane St.
- Jackson Heights Library
35-81 81st St.
- Corona Library
38-23 104th St.
- Flushing Library
41-17 Main St.

BRONX

- Mott Haven Library
321 E. 140th St.
- Mothers on the Move
928 Intervale Ave.
- Hunt’s Point Library
877 Southern Blvd.
- High Bridge Library
78 W. 168th St.

'This Is the Incubator'

ARTISTS LOOK TO CHANGE POLITICAL CLIMATE

STORY BY JOHN TARLETON
PHOTOS BY ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

Tens of thousands of protesters from across the United States are expected to fill the streets of Midtown Manhattan on September 21. They will demand that world leaders take action on climate change at a U.N. summit to be held in the city two days later. More than getting large numbers of people into the streets, organizers of the People's Climate March are turning to artists to drive home their message that pursuing business-as-usual policies while the planet burns is no longer acceptable.

The climate march will include hundreds of children carrying their own hand-made signs and banners, scientists in white lab coats, building trades workers with images of green buildings, Hurricane Sandy survivors holding aloft waves made of papier mâché, a bike bloc, a boat bloc, roving musicians, a climate march chorus, a "people's treaty" mass public ritual at the end of the protest and much more.

"This is the place where we can show all the different ways climate change affects human life," said Rachel Schragis, a visual artist and organizer with the environmental group 350.org.

Much of the arts production for the climate march and other spin-off protests around the U.N. summit will take place out of the second floor of the newly opened Mayday community center in Bushwick, seven subway stops into Brooklyn and far removed from the wealth and power of Midtown. The space will also host working group meetings and possibly an online media center that would cover the climate mobilization.

On the first Sunday in August, the 4,000-square-foot Mayday arts space was already bustling with energy as People's Climate Arts Team staffers and volunteers moved in donat-

WORK & PLAY: A woman paints signs at the Mayday Space while an adult and a child share a light-hearted moment.



MAKING A PLAN: People's Climate Arts Team project organizers Gan Golan (left) and Rachel Schragis (right) consult.

ed furniture and supplies and painted colorful signs to be posted around the space. The expectation that hundreds more people will be pouring into the space in several weeks' time was palpable.

"To see a space like this pop up feels

coordinator and former curator of a radical Latino art gallery in San Francisco.

The People's Climate March has been endorsed by more than 700 groups from across the country, including a number of New York City labor unions, faith-based groups and



LONG VIEW: Setting up the arts production room on the second floor of Mayday Space.

community organizations. The two biggest players behind the protest are 350.org and Avaaz, a global, online civic organization co-founded by Moveon.org.

Planning for the climate march began early this year. Activists with past ties to the Occupy movement urged the protest's leaders to put arts at the center of the event and to not make a large turnout the sole metric of success.

CONVERGING FOR THE CLIMATE

Can capitalism solve the climate crisis it created? Or will addressing climate change require system change, i.e., a radical break with a socioeconomic model that values profits above people and the planet? Organizers with the NYC Climate Convergence believe the latter. They are hosting a Sept. 19-21 gathering that will feature movement-building workshops, skill shares and a roster of speakers that includes food sovereignty champion Vandana Shiva (at left), Bolivian labor leader and water rights activist Oscar Olivera and 2012 Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein (at right).

The NYC Climate Convergence will host a fundraiser for the event Aug. 29 at the rooftop garden of the Brooklyn Commons at 388 Atlantic Avenue. For more information, see convergeforclimate.org.

— INDYPENDENT STAFF





INSTITUTION BUILDER: Mayday Space co-founder Ana Nogueira (far left) helps with artwork.

MISSION STATEMENT: People's Climate Arts Team members believe everyone is an artist and look forward to working with groups from across the city.

People's Climate March leaders have committed substantial resources to the arts space, including funding for five full-time staff positions. In time, the march may be seen as a breakthrough in how activists from different organizing traditions can mesh their strengths to create a more powerful protest than any could do on their own.

"We have the perfect marriage of the grassroots and the funding of the 501c3," said Oja Vincent, director of operations for the arts space.

Climate march organizers have worked to make sure that the march and the arts space reflect the diversity of the city. Grants have been made to a number of groups, including Rockaway Wildfire, Right to the City Alliance, the Sunset Park-based UPROSE and the Immigrant Workers Art Collective. Each of these groups will be producing their own art for the march with help from the trained artists as needed.

For de Anda, the work going into the march will help to build relationships among a city-wide network of groups that can be activated again in the future. Bringing the People's Climate March art space to Bushwick has also been a boon for Mayday.

"This is our wildest dream come true," said Ana Nogueira, one of Mayday's co-founders. "It's a great start to the space."

Nogueira, a journalist and documentary filmmaker who co-founded *The Independent* in 2000, and Mcnair Scott, her business partner, hope to launch a bar and performance space on the first floor by the end of the year. The revenues from that would be used to subsidize an ongoing non-profit social movement space on the second floor.

"Our movements need infrastructure," Nogueira said. "Being in a movement building having face-to-face conversations with people makes our work more fun and effective."

For now, the focus at Mayday is on filling New York's streets next month with politically charged art. Climate change has languished as a political issue while the planet has heated up at an alarming rate. For the People's Climate March to have an impact, organizers know that it will take a whole lot of feet in the streets as well as visionary messaging that conveys why they are there.

"This is the incubator where people are coming together to create images that will last beyond the march," de Anda said of the art space. "If we do this right, it will last in the perceptions that people will take with them from this event."

"For popular social movements to succeed, art and creative work must be at the core of their visions," said Gan Golan, another arts team project coordinator.

Putting art at the center of a movement, explains Golan, allows it to speak in a bold, unapologetic voice and to offer a galvanizing vision of not only what people are fighting against, but what they are fighting for.

Golan is on leave from his position as national training director for Beautiful Trouble, a network of artist-activists that trains grassroots movements in how to be more creative and impactful. In Golan's recounting of U.S. social movement history over the past 40 years, the unraveling of the New Left and the counter-culture at the end of the 1960s prompted a shift toward more button-downed, professionalized forms of activism. This turn saw the rise of non-profits with corporate structures that focused on winning incremental victories. The cautious speech of well-educated professionals like lawyers and academics became ascendant while the utopian voice of the artist was cast aside.

That is beginning to change, says Golan, especially since Occupy's success in bringing a vision of broad-based resistance to corporate rule into mainstream society, something others on the Left had failed to do for decades.

Occupy also helped to popularize a networked approach to organizing that creates real or virtual spaces from which people can self-organize their own actions. This approach, which Golan refers to as Organizing 3.0, is gaining more acceptance, he says, from people doing Organizing 1.0 (traditional Saul Alinsky-style community organizing) and Organizing 2.0 (Internet-based activism that relies on large numbers of people responding to appeals to carry out small tasks to achieve a larger goal).

"Each of these models is very good at very specific things," Golan says. "Our goal is not to replace other models, but we can be the missing ingredient."



DEMOCRACYNOW.ORG

TUNE IN

NYC RADIO

WBAI 99.5FM 8am M-F

NYC TELEVISION

CUNY-TV

6:30pm M-F, 1am Tu-F

Manhattan MNN

8am and 7pm M-F

Brooklyn BCAT

9am M-F

DISH Network & DirecTV

Free Speech TV

8am, noon, 8pm

and midnight M-F

8am, noon, 7pm Sat

8am, noon Sun

Link TV

11am and 6pm M-F

A Daily Independent
Global News Hour

with Amy Goodman
and Juan Gonzalez



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

"It is an absolute outrage that Chelsea Manning is currently languishing behind bars whilst those she helped to expose, who are potentially guilty of human rights violations, enjoy impunity."

**Erika Guevara Rosas
Americas Director
Amnesty International
30 July 2014**

Learn more about heroic WikiLeaks whistle-blower former
US Army intelligence analyst PFC Chelsea Manning at

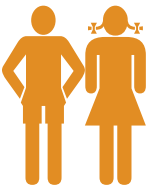
www.chelseamanning.org

Ad designed and published by the Chelsea Manning Support Network

6 Ways to Raise a Ruckus

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

Participants in the People's Climate March will use art and creativity to give expression to the myriad reasons why it's important to take action on climate change. Here are six groups already preparing for the big day.



KIDS BLOC

Children are the least responsible for climate change but will feel the most severe impacts if nothing is done to change course. At the Sept. 21 People's Climate March, children ages 3–13 will bring their signs, messages and voices to the street — marching against climate change and its disastrous consequences as members of Kids Bloc alongside their adult caregivers.

In the run-up to the march, Kids Bloc organizers will be holding educational workshops about climate change. Each workshop will offer age-appropriate information about climate change and the opportunity for kids to make something to carry or wear at the march.

Workshops will be held on Sept. 6–7 at the Mayday Space and on Sept. 13–14 at a site to be determined. Workshop times on both weekends are 10am, 12pm, 2pm and 4pm with workshops at 10am and 2pm geared toward children ages 3–7 and 12pm and 4pm aimed at ages 8–13. All workshops will be free of charge and last less than two hours. No need to attend more than one. For more information, contact Donna Oblongata at donna@whamcity.com or Patrick Costello at ptack.costello@gmail.com.



WORKERS ART COALITION

The Workers Art Coalition is a group made up primarily of rank-and-file tradespeople, many of whom are students at the Van Arsdale Center for Labor Studies and in the building trades, who collaborate on art and movement building projects with allied artists. Working out of the Mayday Space, they will be developing creative means to show what a green building future could look like. For more information, contact barrieallisonline@gmail.com.



BOAT BLOC

We all live downstream. That's the message of the Seachange Flotilla, which will travel down the Hudson River from Troy, NY, to New York City over two weeks starting Aug. 30. Members of the flotilla will make the trip in papier mâché vessels they recently built (see photo caption below). Along the way, they will visit sites of current and planned fossil fuel infrastructure, as well as sustainability projects. For more, see seachange2014.tumblr.com. For ongoing coverage of the Seachange Flotilla's journey down the Hudson River, follow indypend.org.



BIKE BLOC

Expect to see a large contingent of bicyclists at the People's Climate March. In the run-up to the big event, members of the New York City Cargo Bike Collective are planning to build a couple of specially modified bikes. One of the them will be designed to pull around a platform for musicians to perform on. A second one will be a 30- to 50- foot long "caterpillar bike" with two sets of seats side by side from front to back. If you like to build or ride crazy, two-wheeled contraptions, see cargobikecollective.tumblr.com or call 347-762-4534.



SCIENTISTS BLOC

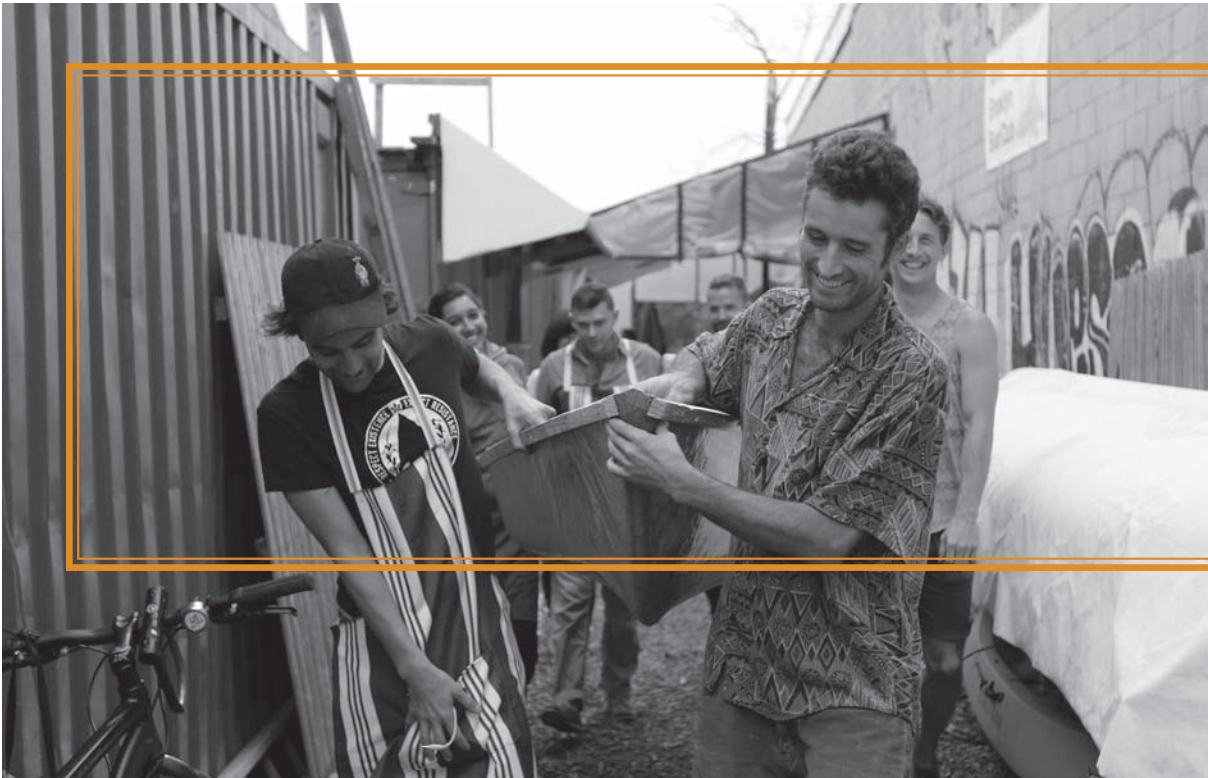
Scientists have warned of the perils of climate change for the past quarter-century with limited success, thanks to an oil industry-financed disinformation campaign. On Sept. 21, scientists will take to the streets in white lab coats to make their point once again. The Scientists Bloc is currently seeking hundreds of lab coats for the march. For more information, see sciencestands.org. If you are a scientist, science educator or science journalist who wants to sign up to join the Scientists Bloc, see bit.ly/scimarch.



INFLATABLES

Large inflatable objects are hard to ignore. Tools for Action plans to produce lots of them for the People's Climate March and other spin-off protests. The group's repertoire will include 6- to 20-foot-wide "carbon bubbles" that will be bounced in the air like giant beach balls to call attention to the actions of large banks and other financial industry players. They have bet so heavily on future profits from fossil fuel extraction projects that a transition to renewable energy sources could lead to the kind of economic meltdown last seen with the 2007-08 collapse of the housing bubble. The group will also make smaller carbon bubbles for members of the Scientists Bloc. Tools for action will host a workshop on how to make inflatables Aug. 23 from 12 to 6pm at Mayday Space. For more information, contact info@toolsforaction.net.

Many other climate arts-related initiatives are getting under way. For more, see peoplesclimatearts.tumblr.com. The next mass meeting of people doing artistic production for the climate march will be on August 21, at 7pm, and will be held at the Mayday Space at 214 Starr St. in Brooklyn.



FLOATS OUR BOAT: Members of the Seachange Flotilla prepare to launch one of their handmade papier mâché boats in Newtown Creek, which flows into the East River. The Flotilla (aka Boat Bloc) will begin a two-week journey at the end of August from Troy, NY, to New York City.

Step Up New York!

By Bill McKibben

New Yorkers are lucky — not only do they get to live in the most dynamic city on the planet, but every once in a while they get to weigh in with extra leverage on the planet’s most pressing issues. Because, of course, New York is the world’s city — and will never be more so than this September.

U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon has summoned world leaders to the United Nations for talks about the planet’s climate — for talks, that is, about the single most urgent problem our earth has faced in the period of human civilization. Those world leaders will come, and the weekend before they get there, all kinds of people will pour into the streets to send them a message: Act. Now.

The People’s Climate March — set to take place in the middle of Manhattan on Sunday, September 21 — will be the biggest rally of its kind in history. And it will be the most diverse: the organizers include New York environmental justice heroes like Eddie Bautista and Elizabeth Yeampierre, who have been dealing with issues like asthma and waste incineration for decades. Labor leaders from 46 different unions, including George Gresham from SIEU Local 1199, Hector Figueroa from SEIU Local 32 BJ, Chris Erikson from Local Union No. 3 IBEW, Lillian Roberts from District Council 37, AFSCME and Mike Mulgrew from United Federation of Teachers-AFT will march with their members to demand government action not only to address climate change, but to use this opportunity to create good jobs for working people across the country. Students at CUNY, Columbia and NYU who have been demanding their schools divest their vast endowments from fossil fuels will be present. And that’s only the beginning: to date, several hundred organizations have committed to participating in the march, and the list is growing.

Anyone who still wonders about why the climate movement has mushroomed so quickly from its beginnings among scientists

and energy experts need only remember Hurricane Sandy. Riding overheated ocean currents and swelling on a sea level already elevated by melting glaciers, it turned New York into a science fiction movie set. The subway tunnels, lifelines of the city, were flooded and impassable; electric power was gone for half of Manhattan; the coastal communities of Brooklyn and Staten Island were turned to wreckage.

But remember: New York’s the global city. Which means that it is filled with people whose roots are elsewhere, and those other places are being wrecked even faster, often without the resources to recover. That’s why there will be protesters from the Pacific Islands, whose countries are literally disappearing, and immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, whose homes are bearing the brunt of climate change even though they’ve done little or nothing to cause the problem.

There’s no guarantee, of course, that this march or anything like it will actually work. Sometimes we rally in the streets and nothing happens — George W. Bush did just keep on with his plans to invade Iraq, for example. But sometimes — sometimes it works.

Throughout U.S. history, mass protests in the streets have paved the way for significant change. The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom gave rise to civil rights legislation as well as the 1960s war on poverty. One of the last great protests in New York City, the early 1980s gathering of nuclear freeze proponents, brought hundreds of thousands of people to Central Park. They made it clear that the zeitgeist was shifting from a world where nuclear deterrence was a given to one where it was considered an unacceptable defense policy. Even Ronald Reagan got the message, and within a couple of years he was talking with Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev about abolishing the weapons altogether.

Climate change is a huge, hard problem: coal, gas and oil are knit into the fabric of



AMID THE TOURISTS: Members of the People’s Climate March Coalition speak about their plans at a July 30 press conference in Times Square.

our lives (though less so in New York than almost anywhere else in the country, since small apartments and good mass transit means the city is greenish almost by default). But the real reason it’s so hard to solve is not that we lack the renewable energy technology to replace fossil fuels, but that there’s so much money stacked up on the side of the fossil fuel industry. Its wheelers and dealers were able to blow up the last major U.N. conference on climate change in Copenhagen in 2009. And left to their own devices they’ll wreck this U.N. session too.

That’s why we need to demonstrate to our politicians that money isn’t everything. We need to show them that they should fear us as well: that people are finally emboldened, ready to act and ready to lead. If we show up in massive numbers, they’ll think twice the next time a fossil fuel lobbyist tells them what to do.

Having the United Nations call New York home — and bring with it its diplomatic plates and privileges, motorcades and requisite police presence — can be kind of a pain. But it does make New Yorkers special — just a short walk or subway ride away, they have the closest thing there is to the center of the world. If there was ever a reason for nations to unite, global warming is it. And if there was ever a moment for New Yorkers to be their beautiful pushy selves, then September 21 is the day.

Bill McKibben is a co-founder of 350.org and author of 15 books on the environment, including The End of Nature and Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet.

GOT A COUCH?

When thousands of people descend on New York City for the weekend of the People’s Climate March, Sept. 20-21, they’ll need a welcome — and a couch to crash on.

You can help too. Both individuals and community institutions are being called on to house the incomers, and organizers have made it easy to sign up.

If you can host as an individual, visit humanhotel.com. The Human Hotel project debuted in 2009 during the last major U.N. summit on climate change in Copenhagen, and was able to facilitate housing for more than 3,000 climate protesters. The website will match hosts and guests who want to stay one or more nights between Sept. 19 and 22, and those providing accommodations can apply to get reimbursements for utility costs.

If you can host through an institution such as a community or faith center, sign up by getting in touch with the march’s Faith Working Group. The first step is to fill out the form at bit.ly/PCMhousing, and the working group will take it from there. Alternatively, email march@greenfaith.org. The suggested date for welcoming folks in is September 20, and if the institution can open its doors for longer, the 19th and 21st as well.

Happy hosting!

— INDYPENDENT STAFF

THE INDYPENDENT

UPCOMING: SPECIAL CLIMATE MARCH ISSUE!

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CROWN HEIGHTS TENANTS SHOW THE WAY

BY ALEX ELLEFSON

Crown Heights, the neighborhood east of the Brooklyn Museum and the tranquil fields of Prospect Park, has the fastest rising rents of any community in Brooklyn. Trendy restaurants and boutiques, with names like the “Owl and Thistle General Store,” have accompanied the more affluent newcomers who are driving up rents. But for the neighborhood’s longtime residents, who are mostly African-American or Caribbean, the changes have attracted real estate and private equity companies that see an opportunity to make an enormous profit by driving tenants out of rent-stabilized apartments.

Some of those longtime residents are turning to the Crown Heights Tenant Union (CHTU), which started last fall as a group of about a dozen residents and community organizers and has since established a presence in dozens of buildings throughout the neighborhood, including 10 buildings where strong tenant associations have taken root.

When CHTU held a meeting in mid-July, almost 100 people, including representatives for a local state assemblyman and the city comptroller, crowded into a sterile, linoleum-floored room at a local nursing center. Those who couldn’t find a seat in one of the chairs arranged in a circle around the room leaned against the walls near the doorway.

As people introduced themselves, they called out their addresses: 740 Franklin Av-

enue, 410 Eastern Parkway, 15 Crown Street, 1115 President Street and so on around the room. While the addresses represented buildings spread throughout the neighborhood, the tenants all had similar concerns. They want to end the aggressive buy-outs, harassment and lack of services that they say are the result of landlords trying to evict rent-regulated tenants in order to bring in more affluent, higher-paying renters.

“I lived here for 53 years,” said Molly Hernandez, 73. “My children were born here, my grandchildren were born here and one of my great-grandchildren were all born at 1059 Union between Franklin and Bedford. So for me personally, they’re going to have to put me in handcuffs to get me out of the building.”

PREDATORY EQUITY

In June 2013, the private-equity real estate company BCB Property Management purchased Hernandez’s building for \$8.2 million — far more than the \$1,053,000 value the New York City Department of Finance (DOF) placed on the property. The DOF also estimated that the building’s net operating income, which is the money the landlord retains after operating costs, was only \$180,714 per year. This is because most of the apartments in 1059 Union Street are rent-stabilized, meaning that BCB can raise the rent by only a limited percentage every year unless the unit is vacated.

Soon after BCB bought the building, ten-

ants said the company started offering residents tens of thousands of dollars to move out of their apartments. For those who refused the buyouts, life in their homes became difficult. BCB started gutting the empty units, ripping out the walls and appliances and converting the one- and two-bedroom family units into three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartments that would go to young professionals and college students for three times the previous rent.

The Department of Buildings recorded 19 complaints by tenants since BCB bought the property, most of which are related to the renovations taking place in vacant apartments. Some of the complaints describe loud noises like jackhammering and pounding on the walls, signs of construction work taking place late in the evening. In one instance, plumbing work done during renovations caused a pipe to break and leak water into the apartment below.

Last fall, Hernandez and some of her fellow tenants at 1059 Union Street reached out to organizers at the Crown Heights Assembly, a tenant advocacy group started by veterans of Occupy Wall Street. Residents at 1059 Union subsequently formed a tenant association, which launched a 311 campaign that involved frequently calling the city’s non-emergency services number (311) and filing complaints for any violations they observed in the building. Eventually, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) took notice and sent agents to the building.

“I was calling 311 about anything that happened in the apartment,” said 29-year-old Nefertiti Macaulay, who turned down a \$60,000 offer to leave the rent-regulated apartment that her family lived in for almost 50 years. “If lights didn’t work, the heat didn’t work, the floors were messed up, noise complaints. We would go to people’s apartments and say, ‘Here, call 311. Here’s my cell phone number. I’ll call for you.’”

The 311 campaign had some effect. This year, HPD admitted two of BCB’s properties, including 1059 Union Street, into its Alternative Enforcement Program, an exclusive list of the 200 “most distressed” residential properties in the city. However, CHTU members said that the extra scrutiny by HPD did little to curb the harassment from their landlord.

“HPD doesn’t seem to have the resources to enforce property law,” said Brianna Harris, a CHTU member who lives down the street from 1059 Union Street. “They’ll come to your building, they’ll inspect, they’ll put a stop-work order and then they don’t actually have the manpower to make sure that order is being enforced.”

JOINING FORCES

When the tenants at 1059 Union Street started making noise about



STEPPING OUT: Crown Heights Tenant Union members march through their neighborhood in June demanding a five-year rent freeze on all rent-stabilized apartments.

the troubles with their landlord, residents in neighboring buildings took notice and created their own tenant associations, eventually joining forces and forming the Crown Heights Tenant Union.

“Going beyond the individual building and doing community organizing is an important breakthrough,” said Tom Angotti, author of *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* and professor of urban affairs at Hunter College. “That’s been a problem in tenant organizing, that buildings don’t talk to each other. You can’t deal with gentrification on a one-building basis.”

Harris first learned about the CHTU in February, when the group held its first rally outside 1059 Union Street in last winter’s frigid weather.

“My boyfriend was walking by when they were having a protest in front of the next building,” Harris said. “They are on our block. He found out they were bought by the same company and they were yelling about exactly what was happening to us.”

Harris’ building at 1115 Union Street was bought by BCB last September, around the same time that the company bought several properties on that block. In fact, the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), an

organization that supports low-income co-ops in New York, has identified 14 BCB-owned properties in the neighborhood, all of which were purchased in the last two years.

However, BCB, which refused to comment for this article, is not the only company gobbling up rent-stabilized properties in Crown Heights. The tenant union has identified nine other real-estate companies that it says are aggressively pushing out the neighborhood’s longtime, rent-stabilized residents in order to move those units out of rent-regulation rolls.

One of those companies is Pinnacle Group, which bought more than 400 rent-stabilized apartment buildings in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx a decade ago. Pinnacle was later investigated by the New York attorney general’s office and forced to pay more than \$1 million in restitution to overcharged tenants. It has also been sued by 22,000 of its tenants in a class-action lawsuit claiming the company had systematically harassed them and failed to comply with rent laws. That case remains tied up in court.

THE LARGER HOUSING CRISIS

The issues raised by CHTU reflect a larger



GETTING ORGANIZED: A tenant speaks at a CHTU meeting in July.

affordable housing crisis that is taking place across the five boroughs. The city is losing rent-regulated apartments faster than they are being added. From 1994 to 2012, the city lost 249,355 rent-stabilized units and added only 144,113, a net loss of 105,242 regulated housing units, according to a study by the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB), which determines the percentage that landlords can increase rents for rent-stabilized apartments.

While there are a variety of factors that contribute to losses in regulated housing, the RGB reported that rent increases brought on after rent-regulated tenants vacate their apartments accounted for the greatest reduction (63 percent) in regulated housing stock last year.

“It’s a pretty good bet that you can push



STARTING POINT: Betty Rice, a longtime resident at 1059 Union St., takes a break in her home. Rice is active in the tenant union and hosted its first meeting in her apartment last fall.

out low-rent-paying tenants and get in higher-income tenants in Crown Heights,” said Benjamin Dulchin, executive director of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development. “It’s not an ethical bet but it’s a pretty good bet. Landlords can either illegally or just-this-side-of-the-line of legal push out low-income paying tenants pretty regularly just by not making repairs or repeated ag-

gressive buyouts or going after them for small things.”

Dulchin explained that when real-estate companies identify a neighborhood that is experiencing gentrification, they base their prices on how much revenue a building would bring in if it were occupied by higher-income

If you’re black or Latino, your landlord has an extra motive to get you out: Your presence signifies a “bad neighborhood,” not the “up-and-coming” trendiness they want to sell. If you’re a young white creative or political type, you’re a pawn in the process. You’ve moved to a neighborhood you can afford that has a bit of an artistic and activist community — which establishes it as a “hip” and safe for more upscale white people. Once that happens, you’re in the way too.

So if you want to keep your home and community, you need to both take care of your own apartment’s situation and build relationships with the neighbors and others in the area.

— STEVEN WISHNIA

Vanishing New York

INTERVIEW BY GIULIA OLSSON

You've noticed it by now: New York City's small businesses are disappearing, and fast. The storefronts of the mom-and-pop shops, dive bars and beloved neighborhood eateries that once characterized New York's streetscape are being filled with national franchises, big retail stores and bank branches. And gradually, the very feel of New York is transforming into something different, something other. Something sanitized.

No one has chronicled this street-level transformation more assiduously over the past seven years than Jeremiah Moss, an East Village resident and author of the popular blog, "Jeremiah's Vanishing New York A.K.A. The Book of Lamentations." His blog is a running archive of rent hikes, demolitions and often-futile neighborhood fights to save longtime businesses. Perhaps most poignant are the photographs: owners' goodbye notes plastered on doors and windows, newly-naked awnings, last meals and drinks.

This transformation, Moss insists in an email interview with *The Independent*, is not the normal organic process of change that alters communities over time but a government-subsidized process of "hyper-gentrification." Moss is unabashed in his dismay over the changes being wrought across the city, but he, for his part, is still holding out — in his home, and tentatively, for a reversal of the public policies driving vanishing New York.

GIULIA OLSSON: What inspired you to start the *Vanishing New York* blog? And what have been some of the most significant experiences of writing it?

JEREMIAH MOSS: I started the blog after spending a few years complaining to anyone who would listen that New York City was undergoing a massive, forced change in the direction of a major upscaling. People kept telling me I was imagining it. They said, "New York has always changed. This is normal." When I started the blog, and as time went by, with the changes snowballing, I discovered that many other people had noticed the same problem. I was not alone.

Maybe that's the most poignant experience, really, the sense of a community coming together around the blog, where people can feel not alone in their grief and outrage over what's happening to the city. That's meant a lot to me.

As you've written about, many decades-old independent bookshops, magazine shops, record shops and bars have been closing in Manhattan in recent years. What are the main causes of this pattern of closures?

The main cause is what I like to call hyper-gentrification. This is not the old-fashioned gentrification of the 20th century, in which middle-class people bought vacant properties in a working-class or poor neighborhood, fixed them up and thus changed the neighborhood gradually and organically, however problematically. Hyper-gentrification is a major strategy



GOOD TIMES: A crowd gathers outside the CBGB music space during the late 1980s.

planned and sponsored by the city government in collusion with corporations. It happens very quickly and spreads wide, out from the center of the city and into the deepest reaches of the outer boroughs.

Along the way, small businesses shutter due to catastrophic rent increases. I've seen countless businesses destroyed by rents that triple, quadruple, even increase tenfold. And these were businesses that were doing well, selling products and serving customers steadily. Landlords see the flood of chains and banks, so they hike rents and evict longstanding tenants in the hopes of attracting a big fish.

What impact does the buildup of market-rate/luxury housing have on changing the small business ecology in a neighborhood?

The kinds of people who can afford to live in luxury housing generally want their neighborhoods to be filled with luxury businesses. So they support the high-end chain stores and boutiques that are flooding in.

What we witnessed on the western end of Bleeker Street, for example, was unprecedented. In just a few years, about 40 small, long-time businesses were pushed out and replaced by high-end luxury shopping mall stores — and it all started with Marc Jacobs. In less than a decade, commercial rents rose from \$75 to \$500 per square foot, and are still climbing. Now Bleeker Street is referred to as "Rodeo Drive" or the "Gold Coast." There is not one single small business left on that stretch.

We're observing widespread gentrification and displacement of longtime businesses and residents from neighborhoods all over the city. What was former Mayor Michael Bloomberg's role in instigating this process? And what has his successor, Bill de Blasio, done about it?

Mayor Bloomberg never disguised his intentions. He stated outright that he saw New York as a "luxury product." He said, again and again, that he wanted to fill the city with the super-rich.

To make New York more attractive to tycoons, Bloomberg rezoned nearly half the city. He handed out tax breaks like free samples at Whole Foods (the upscale grocery chain got over \$4 million to hy-

per-gentrify Brooklyn's toxic Gowanus). Business tax breaks tripled, from \$1 billion to \$3 billion annually. Subsidies in the many millions went to multinational corporations and real-estate developers. Eminent domain was used to seize or threaten the seizure of private property in mega-development projects like Atlantic and Hudson Yards. A staunch supporter of eminent domain, Bloomberg made it a top priority to oppose legislation that would "cripple" redevelopment, i.e., limit the city's power to steal from the poor and middle-class and give to the rich.

So far, Bill de Blasio has done little to nothing to course correct.

Why do you think commercial rent controls haven't been established in the city?

De Blasio has said, while answering a question I asked him in an online forum, that commercial rent control is not workable. I'm not sure why, other than the fact that landlords and big business would go ballistic. Residential rent control was established in 1943 — it would never fly in today's anti-regulation, free-market climate.

The new businesses that are opening up in New York and replacing smaller shops tend to be of a similar character: we see tons of national or international retail franchises and upscale bars and restaurants popping up. How is this trend remaking the culture of the city?

It's killing the soul of New York and turning it into another Anywhere, USA. Soul-sucking, culture-killing and suburbanizing, this trend has taken a vibrant, living city and made it dull, a place where creative people can no longer thrive, where the non-rich can't survive and where affluent mainstream Americans dictate the look and feel of every street.

From its beginnings, the city existed as a space apart. Exceptionally able to tolerate — and celebrate — a multiplicity of cultures and ways of living, it had been both the gateway to America for foreign immigrants and the escape from America for those who never fell in line with the "American way" of normal.

Hyper-gentrification, which could also be thought of as suburbanization or corporatization, is changing all that. While the poor, immigrants and artists can still

live in pockets of the outer boroughs, that won't last long. Manhattan, many parts of Brooklyn and increasingly, Queens, have been closed to anyone without serious money. What this means is that young and hungry people aren't moving to New York and the existing artists are leaving, and that means no more creative edge.

What steps do you feel need to be taken to reverse the pattern of "vanishing New York"?

Mayor de Blasio needs to step up. Here's one possible prescription:

- Pass the Small Business Survival Act to create fair rent negotiations.
- Protect the city's oldest and most beloved small businesses by awarding them with selective commercial rent control. We never should have lost historic businesses like CBGB's, Lenox Lounge, Bill's Gay 90s and many others to rent hikes.
- Take away tax breaks and incentives from big business and give them to mom-and-pops, especially the long-term survivors.
- Telling people to "shop local" doesn't cut it. We all shop at chains from time to time and, the more they multiply, the more they push out local alternatives, the harder it is to avoid them. Chains need to be controlled and reduced. Follow San Francisco's example, where City Hall mandates tight controls over "formula retail." Pass a citywide ordinance to limit the number of chains and to keep chains from clustering together.

To find out more and read "Jeremiah's Vanishing New York," visit vanishing-newyork.blogspot.com.

One Block on the LES

MOM & POP SHOPS BARELY HOLD ON

BY GIULIA OLSSON

Along a one-block stretch in the Lower East Side — Clinton Street, from Delancey to Rivington Streets — stand some of the oldest small businesses in the neighborhood. But how long will they remain?

Owners and employees of establishments along the block described to *The Independent* the radical changes they're observing in the neighborhood: Affluent young white transplants have displaced many longtime residents in the historically immigrant-heavy district, populating formerly rent-stabilized apartments and hulking new glass tower condominiums. In doing so, they have brought with them spending tastes that spur the arrival of pricier boutiques and eateries. Their owners are willing to shell out more for rent, and landlords, true to form, are taking advantage.

New York City has not had commercial rent controls since 1963, when WWII-era regulations expired, and attempts to revive them have been unsuccessful. On Clinton Street, the effects of this policy failure are evident: new establishments now stand alongside unlit, empty storefronts emblazoned with "For Rent" signs. And those running older small business are as if under siege, fearful that they'll be next.



VIDA NATURAL: HEALTH FOOD STORE
79 CLINTON ST.
JOSÉ ROMANO, OWNER

New Jersey native José Romano is one of Clinton Street's oldest veterans. His business, Vida Natural: Health Food Store, Natural Vitamins and Herbal Nutrients, has endured for more than 19 years. A member of the Association of Latino Business Owners and Residents in the Lower East Side, Romano expresses concerns about the future of small businesses in the area and attributes the risks they face to a combination of factors: rising rents, an influx of younger residents and the power of the Internet.

The rent problem plays a big role, because, as Romano says, "Businesses don't have protection. There's no law." Sometimes, he says, new landlords include a 25 to 35 percent rent increase in a lease; if it's the same landlord, it may be only 20 to 25 percent. When Romano's landlord changed, he got stuck with a 38 percent hike.

But rising rents are only one part of the equation. "We are losing customers," Romano says. "The young people, when they move into the area, they don't spend too much money here. And the Internet, they make a lot of business. Cheaper price, not good quality, and then we can't compete with that. Not only me — everybody."



BRIDAL SHOP GENESIS PARTY SUPPLIES
97 CLINTON ST.
LOURDES SALAZAR, OWNER

Bushwick's Lourdes Salazar came to work at Bridal Shop Genesis Party Supplies 30 years ago, and has been the shop's owner for 22 years. She recounts that in her time at the store, 11 other stores in the neighborhood that sold the same types of products, mainly party supplies ranging from balloons to specialized cake décor, closed.

While the shop has its loyal customers — Salazar greeted a woman who entered the store by her first name and they chatted like old friends — Salazar has noticed during her time working in the Lower East Side that a lot of the neighborhood's businesses and residents have packed their bags and left the area. "A lot [of customers] that came regularly have left to Philadelphia, or Connecticut," she says.

CIBAO RESTAURANT
72 CLINTON ST.
TINA MARTINEZ, WAITRESS AND COOK

Cibao has been a mainstay of the Lower East Side for almost four decades. It's nearly 4pm, a few hours past lunchtime, and many of the restaurant's seats have hungry occupants. Affordable and delicious because of specialties like their "Spanish-style pepper steak" and snacks like "chicken croquetas," Cibao might just be the oldest establishment on the block.

But despite the restaurant's great standing in the neighborhood, waitress and cook Tina



Martinez, of Washington Heights (above, at right), feels the pressures experienced by owners and workers at other small businesses in the neighborhood.

"The problem is the rent," she says. "It's the only problem. It's too high. Every year, it goes higher. We started off small, I don't know how much, but now it's \$5,000 for us. And it just keeps on increasing."



TANK'S BARBER SHOP
87 CLINTON ST.
ANDRÉ RESTO, CARPENTER

By the door of Tank's Barber Shop sits Vietnam War veteran André Resto, the shop's carpenter and a handyman known around the neighborhood.

"The businesses around here are really slow, you know," he says as he swivels around on his chair, hands folded, and looks onto the street through the shop's front windows. Over the last 10 years, he has seen the streetscape transform. "This here used to be the best street, but now, all the stores around here are down. From here to Houston [Street], you're counting 23 stores that've closed."

Resto also knows about running a small business in the Lower East Side. He had a fabric shop in the neighborhood for 48 years, but was forced to shutter it in 2008. Why? "No money," he laments. "The problem here is the rent. Everybody's looking for money and there's no money."



JESSY'S SHOP
100 CLINTON ST.
MUSTAFA, MANAGER

Upon first meeting, Mustafa thought we wanted to know about opening a business in the Lower East Side and offered some advice: "If you want to open a business, don't do it. Work for someone else instead."

Mustafa (who did not want to be photographed) is the manager at Jessy's Shop, a clothing store at 100 Clinton Street. The store has been open for about three years, and his advice came in stark contrast to the bustle there: several customers were browsing colorful, unique and inexpensive items of clothing, and many knew him by his first name and made conversation.

Nonetheless, he's here after having been forced to clear out of his 14th Street clothing shop due to an increase in rent. And even here, "business is bad," he says, shaking his head. "People come back to the store because there's nice people, good prices and good service," he says, but he's concerned, wistfully recalling a friend and owner of a Chinese bakery on the corner of Clinton and Rivington whose rent rose from \$4,500 to \$7,000 once her lease was up for renewal. That bakery is no longer there.

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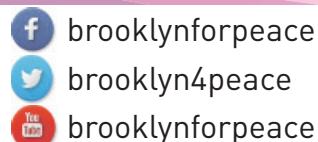
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CROWN HEIGHTS

Continued from page 9

tenants paying market-rate values instead of the residents who are already living in the building in rent-regulated units. They then pursue a strategy to drive out tenants living in rent-regulated apartments.

"I think the growth [of CHTU] speaks to the real crunch that people are feeling in the neighborhood around their rights being violated and their really strong desire to hang on to their homes," said Cea Weaver, who works closely with the tenant union and is an assistant director at UHAB.

OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES

Another feature distinctive of CHTU is its inclusiveness. Members come from almost every demographic in the neighborhood, encompassing both longtime residents and newcomers, which Angotti applauds.

"Historically, race has been a polarizing factor in the city," Angotti said. "When people don't talk to each other, there's distrust. And landlords play that to their favor."

Esteban Girón, who moved into an apartment at 951 Carroll Street last year, was upset to find out that he was paying \$600 more than the previous tenants.

"I don't think a lot of the new tenants realize that we're just intermediaries," he said at the July meeting. "We're not expected to stay there forever. The landlords think that we're in an economic bracket that's able to get the rent from where it is right now to where it is deregulated."

And while Girón's building is owned by a smaller landlord than BCB and Pinnacle, public records show that the mortgage on his building comes from New York Community Bank, the 20th-largest bank holding company in the United States with \$48.6 billion dollars in assets. On its website, the company boasts that it is "a leading producer of multi-family loans in New York City, with an emphasis on apartment buildings that feature below-market rents."

UHAB has identified scores of buildings in Crown Heights that have multi-million-dollar mortgages from New York Community Bank.

"Banks are enabling landlords. We think it would be amazing if banks would just go and find out what the buildings' incomes are before they lend money," Weaver said. "Unfortunately, with incentives that favor banks who get as much money out the door as possible, it's the kind of thing that doesn't happen."

Girón is currently battling his landlord in housing court. He claims that the renovations made to his apartment do not merit the 80 percent rent increase that occurred after the last tenant moved out. Girón has been withholding his rent since April to protest what he said is an illegal overcharge.

"If we're able to beat our landlord with just

our one little apartment, what that means for the [tenant union's] ability to negotiate with landlords, that's really the core of having something like the tenant union as opposed to a tenant organization that works just for your building," Girón told *The Independent*. "Our hope is that by singling out our landlord, it will set a precedent for other people who want to question their rent history."

CHTU's work is starting to draw interest outside of Crown Heights. In Ridgewood, Queens, tenant organizer Raquel Pacheco and two others recently started the Ridgewood Tenants Union, which is looking to use the same grassroots, neighborhood-wide organizing model to build tenant power in a community recently hit by a wave of gentrification.

"One thing CHTU has done beautifully," Pacheco said, "is bridge the gap between longtime residents and newer residents to work together toward a common goal, and that's something we'd like to create in Ridgewood, too."

AMBITIOUS PLANS

While organizing tenant associations, filing lawsuits and launching 311 campaigns are some of the Crown Heights Tenant Union's accomplishments so far, organizers say that their ultimate goal is to force property owners in the neighborhood to sign a collective bargaining agreement that would put residents on an equal playing field with their landlords. Already, they have issued a list of demands that include a five-year rent freeze on all apartments, a right to timely repairs and a guarantee that any landlord-offered buyout must be worth at least five years' rent at the apartment's current market rate.

More than 400 Crown Heights residents have attended at least one tenant union meeting. This fall, the tenant union plans to hold its first tenant congress, where the group will collectively decide how to move forward now that the organization is growing larger and becoming more visible. One of the questions on the table is whether to organize a joint rent strike across the different buildings with tenant associations, which could force landlords to come to the table and negotiate.

"Unfortunately, the onus in New York City is on tenants to enforce rent-regulation laws themselves," Weaver said. "The one thing that we hope comes from this is that landlords understand that they are not going to be able to manipulate the rent laws. If we can show the landlords through strong tenant organizing that it's not possible for them to make their money back, hopefully we can influence their behavior."

For more about the Crown Heights Tenant Union, see crownheightstenantunion.org.



STREET VIEW: Crown Heights has the fastest-growing rents of any neighborhood in Brooklyn.

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Gentrification, USA

BY RACHEL LAFORREST

Sitting on the stoop of my mother's 3-bedroom garden apartment in Queens, I watch over my 4-year-old son playing in the courtyard. It's a familiar, comforting spot. Many members of my partner and I's extended family live here, in the same small, tight-knit community that I grew up in. Now I'm raising my family here too.

This intergenerational community would never have been possible if we didn't have access to affordable housing. For us, it takes the form of rent-stabilized apartments. But many other New Yorkers are not, or are no longer, so lucky.

There are only about 1 million units of rent-stabilized housing left in New York City, a 20 percent decrease since 1981. Rent stabilization, a law that provides for annual caps on the rent hikes landlords can impose, is one of the best regulations we have for maintaining true affordability. So it is no surprise that as rent-stabilized units are vacated, landlords swoop in to move them into deregulated, market-rate status. The law itself has been under attack for decades and continues to be eroded by lawmakers and developers looking to reap high profits in "desirable" neighborhoods.

Low- and middle-income families across the entire city are facing major difficulties in finding homes they can afford and staying in them. Over the last decade, the increase in rent costs has been double that of wages. Simultaneously, even with decent inclusionary zoning practices — rules that mandate that any new development or rehab include a percentage of affordable units — these families are being closed out of the vast majority of new housing being built in the five boroughs. "Affordability" is defined using a calculation of Area Median Income (AMI), and that takes huge swaths of a region into account — lumping millionaires, middle-class families and the working poor together. In a city with one of the highest wealth disparities in the nation, "affordable" homes are effectively out of reach for low-income and extremely low-income New Yorkers.

In addition, even those who can "afford" to remain — often, by just scraping by — have to prepare for living in a drastically overhauled neighborhood. Such a neighborhood is one in which affordable food, schools, health care and other services are no longer available because the local economy has shifted to meet the desires and needs of a new, wealthier demographic. This is the full picture of gentrification.

NOT JUST NYC

The situation is not unique to New York. We are in the midst of a national housing affordability crisis the likes of which this country has never known. According to the Center for American Progress' 2012 report, *The Housing Market is Not Only for Homeowners*, nationally, rents climbed 4 percent in 2012 alone and another 4.6 percent in 2013 — and are expected to increase by at least 4 percent per year in 2014 and 2015. Meanwhile, real median renter incomes fell over much of the beginning of the century, ending 13 percent lower in 2012 than in 2000. Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies' 2013 report, *America's Rental Housing: Evolving Markets and Needs*, revealed that almost half

of renters, 46 percent, earn below \$30,000 annually, including 22 percent whose income is below \$15,000 — roughly equivalent to working year-round at the minimum wage.

The foreclosure crisis has driven millions of former homeowners into the rental market. And recent reports of a housing market rebound are misleading: Nationally, economic and social costs for most renter households are increasing and are expected to worsen in coming years. For low-income renters in particular, chronic housing insecurity has reached disastrous proportions, exacerbated by weak federal, state and local protections for renters, immense tax breaks for developers that undercut revenue generation for cities and states and the entrance of the corporate landlord.

The most recent growth of, corporate landlord holdings has been driven by private equity firms, and chances are that they're run by the same actors who crashed the economy the last time around. These firms are buying up single-family foreclosures and non-performing loans across the country, properties that Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) are eager to get off their hands. They are then converting them to rental properties and charging rents that often times exceed even local market rates.

Taking advantage of weak renter protections, these firms are gobbling up housing stock — they've gained hundreds of thousands of units over the last 2 years — and offering rentals that are poorly rehabbed, suffer from pest problems and are inaccessible to those formerly incarcerated or low-income families. In the meantime, they wait for the values of these homes to rise, so they can evict their tenants and move the properties back into the market for purchase. It is presumed that these "bad actors" are hoping that their business will continue to grow rapidly and without much public scrutiny.

RENTER RESISTANCE

The growing threat to accessible stable housing will only be curbed by robust renter organizing around the country, and tenants and local housing groups are stepping up and calling attention to the issues on the ground. In New York City, groups like the Brooklyn-based Crown Heights Tenants Union (see page 8) and the newer Queens-based Ridgewood Tenants Union are organizing tenants to join with other decades-old community groups in a fight to ensure that Mayor Bill de Blasio's plans for housing create quality and affordability for the city's most vulnerable communities.

In Boston, foreclosure, tenant and environmental groups like City Life/Vida Urbana (CLVU), Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) and Alternatives for Community and



ROB LAQUINTA

Environment (ACE) have joined forces to combat developers who are driving rent and home prices through the roof. In Los Angeles, longtime housing groups and community developers like Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) and East Los Angeles Community Corporation are engaging congressional representatives to take on corporate landlords and keep community wealth where it belongs. And in Rhode Island, a local coalition of tenants and homeowners led by Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) have just won a statewide ordinance around just-cause evictions.

In terms of policy, ensuring decent housing as a right rather than as a commodity represents the best path forward for long-term community stability and broad-based prosperity. All levels of government must recognize and protect this right and, concretely, prioritize the provision of decent housing for those most in need.

How can we achieve this? Tenants, organizers and lawmakers must assert the concept of housing security more regularly. Housing security is not simply a reflection of affordability, which is generally the primary consideration that drives current debates. Instead, it recognizes that decent housing involves paying attention to a number of interrelated concerns. In brief, these are affordability; accessibility; long-term stability and protection from displacement; health, sustainability and quality; and community control.

Taken together, these five pillars comprise a model that meaningfully engages with the interests of those for whom housing insecurity has been, or may become, a fact of life. If we uphold these principles as tenants, organizers and lawmakers, then we have the chance to foster healthy communities in permanently affordable housing and break the unacceptable pattern of failure that has defined this country's investment (or lack thereof) in housing for decades. Nothing can replace traditional community organizing as the vehicle to achieve this, and now, more than ever, is the time to invest in organizing that works to reclaim, remain in and rebuild our communities.

Rachel LaForest is the executive director of the Right to the City Alliance. For more, see homesforall.org.

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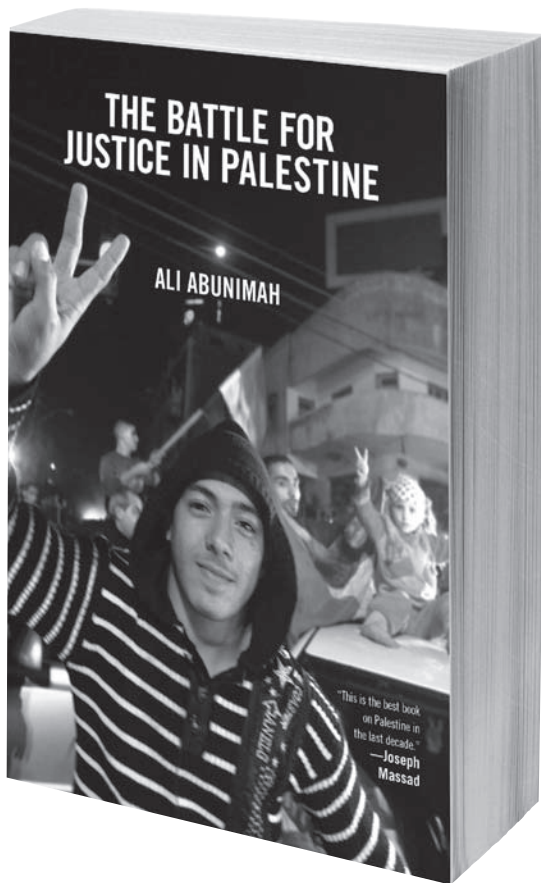
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WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL

Lessons from a Distant War

BY MICHAEL LARDNER

Launched 100 years ago this month, World War I was one of history's most lethal conflicts, second only to the world war that followed it a quarter-century later. In the “Great War,” as it was called at the time, more than 15 million people were killed, empires were toppled and terrifying new weapons that led to killing on an industrial scale were introduced. A century later, World War I has been mostly forgotten. Yet, as the centennial of the war's beginning is marked this month, there's much to be learned from looking back on this long-ago conflict.

WHAT CAUSED THE WAR?

The standard historical narrative is that World War I was caused by the June 1914 assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and an entangling series of alliances that saw one European nation after another mobilize its armies following the assassination. This is true on the surface. However, the conflict was driven by inter-imperial rivalries between England, France, Germany, Russia and the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. In the decades preceding the war, the major European powers had engaged in fierce competition for overseas colonies, especially in Africa, to fuel the growth of their economies. If Archduke Ferdinand had not been assassinated, some other event would likely have sparked this conflict. Like all capitalist wars, this one was ultimately a struggle for control of natural resources and markets. In addition, shareholders in munitions and supporting industries recognized the tremendous profits to be made with the large-scale military spending this war initiated.

DASHED EXPECTATIONS

Throughout history, rulers have taken their peoples to war with certainty that the conflict would be short and quickly resolved to their satisfaction. The European leaders who plunged their nations into war in August 1914 were no different. They thought the war would be over by 1915. However, the romance of the 19th-century cavalry charge soon gave way to the grim reality of the machine gun, poison gas and trench warfare. The war dragged on until Germany surrendered in November 1918.

THE FAILURE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES

In the two decades before the war, socialists and trade unionists across Europe warned that capitalist rivalry would lead to war. Instead of using the crisis of war to “hasten the fall of capitalist domination,” as they had vowed in a 1912 state-



ment, the respective socialist parties in each country embraced the call to defend their own national culture. For many functionaries of the “official left,” class collaboration had its benefits. By the end of summer 1914, hundreds of thousands of workers from various countries were marching off to war to kill and maim each other in unprecedented numbers.

BODY COUNT

The battles of this war remain the deadliest in human history: 500,000 men died in the First Battle of the Marne (1914); 500,000 at the Battle of Gallipoli (1915); 900,000 at the Battle of Verdun (1916) and 1,200,000 at the Battle of the Somme (1916), including 58,000 British casualties on the first day of the Somme offensive. Half of all French males age 18-32 were killed during the war. The fields in northeastern France on which most of these battles were fought are now quiet farmland where locals still turn up human remains and unexploded bombs, creating victims one century later.

A TRULY GLOBAL CONFLICT

Capitalism was a global system by 1914. The youth of Europe were joined in this prolonged dance of death by young soldiers from the European colonies in Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. While World War I is most closely associated with the Western Front, fighting also took place across Africa and much of the Middle East.

IMPERIAL SCHEMES

The true nature of the war was perhaps best captured in the Sikes-Picot Agreement that England and France negotiated in 1916. This secret accord carved up the Middle East that would emerge when the Ottoman Empire (allied with Germany) was toppled the following year. Creating artificial boundaries across the region, the French gained control of what would become Syria and Lebanon while the British sphere of influence contained the future Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan, as well as Palestine. Upon taking over Palestine, the British pledged support for establishing a future Jewish homeland there.

EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT

On the eve of World War I, there had not been a major continental war in Europe since Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo in 1815. To many Europeans, the idea of a major conflagration breaking out at the center of world civilization was impossible. However, their colonial subjects in Africa and elsewhere could have guessed otherwise. In the Belgian Congo, roughly half the population of 20 million people was killed between 1885 and 1910, with workers who failed to meet rubber harvesting quotas having their hands chopped off. The other European powers carried out only slightly less brutal policies in their own colonies. The Great War became European savagery turned on itself.

MUTINY & REVOLT

There were revolts, mutinies, desertions and conscription refusals in most countries. In Russia, a series of devastating defeats turned public opinion against the war and set off a chain of events that led to the abdication of Czar Nicholas II and the 1917 Revolution. Wars often produce unintended consequences. In this case, a conflict started by capitalist powers pursuing their own narrow advantages helped bring into existence the world's first socialist revolution.

‘THE WAR TO END ALL WARS’

World War I was hailed at the time as “the war to end all wars.” It turned out to be no such thing. The vast armies created to fight this war furthered the integration of militaries into governments. The groundwork was laid for the military-industrial complex and a relentless (and highly profitable) arms race that continues to this day. The German revolutionary philosopher Rosa Luxemburg posited in 1916 that the world faced a choice between “socialism or barbarism.” This is still true, with our planet's ecosystems now under severe assault as well. Our best hope today, as it was 100 years ago, remains in our allegiance to the shared humanity of all people, one that is stronger than the appeals for loyalty to a single nation-state.

Michael Lardner is a long-time convener of the Revolutions Study Group at the Brooklyn Commons.

Changing the Ed Reform Narrative

This is Not a Test: A New Narrative on Race, Class and Education

By JOSÉ LUIS VILSON

HAYMARKET BOOKS, 2014

Badass Teachers Unite: Reflections on Education, History and Youth Activism

MARK NAISON

HAYMARKET BOOKS, 2014

It's not news that public education is taking a beating from corporate America. In a now-familiar narrative, it's teachers and schools who are to blame for failing students — and not poverty, hunger, the lack of health and social services, high rates of family homelessness and all the other challenges created by rampant inequality.

These assumptions drive an emphasis on punishing teachers and schools whose students do poorly on standardized tests for literacy and math. It is the cornerstone of President Obama's education policy, and is supported by both major parties. For the Democrats, it is a quick and cheap fix to seeing that every child — at least polemically — is in a position to receive an equal education. For the GOP, it's pure butter, one more way to turn out obedient workers without the capacity to question, let alone challenge, the existing order.

This toxic state of affairs is

sparking a torrent of critical writing by teachers and educators who know their way around a classroom much better than the corporate reformers. Out of this ferment come two important new books that tell a different story about what teachers do, what parents want and what children need.

José Luis Vilson is a nine-year veteran math teacher in Upper Manhattan with a degree in computer science. He writes in his highly readable, witty and incisive *This is Not a Test: A New Narrative on Race, Class and Education* that education specialists touting uniform standards for all students are really “data maniacs” who can only do harm by peddling “outcomes-based” education that relies on standardized test scores. For Vilson, traditional “drill-and-fill” teaching, as well as the new blame-the-teacher-first model, are both anathema to real education. He insists that quality education can't be achieved by imposing a curriculum that means more test prep and less art, music and sports. That's a recipe for failure.

He also thinks his fellow teachers can't leave it at griping about impossible school conditions to their colleagues in the teachers lounge or to their families at home, or even be known solely as critics, but must go beyond “voice” and assume “leadership.” Instead of complaining about why teaching sucks, he says, “let's talk about why we stay.” He always puts children first.

The book also does yeoman's work — without once invoking the term identity politics — in drawing out the living links between

students' class, education and race.

In *Badass Teachers Unite: Reflections on Education, History and Youth Activism* Fordham historian and African American Studies professor Mark Naison can't speak as a public school teacher, but as a scholar who has spent some 40 years visiting Bronx schools, getting students and teachers interested in the rich vein of local borough history as a way of rediscovering themselves. Like Vilson, Naison knows that teaching the children of the poor takes more than knowledge of subject matter or even lecturing expertise. Educators must forge real connections with each student. What Vilson does in math (yes, math) Naison masterfully does with social studies students and teachers by taking the seemingly abstract and linking it to everyday life in class society.

As Naison puts it, that connection is forged “not by insulating schoolchildren from the forces surrounding them and educating them to escape the neighborhood, but by engaging them in a democratic community planning process along with their teachers, their parents and their neighbors, and by making a problem-centered pedagogy part of the school curriculum.” He wants schools to return to a function they fulfilled to some degree in the past, when they served as centers of their communities.

If that sounds like wisdom ripped from Paolo Freire's *Peda-*



GARY MARTIN

gogy of the Oppressed, you would be right, but it's no one's warmed-over cant.

Both Naison and Vilson come with years of experience bringing schooling alive for children whose unstable home lives and disadvantaged communities leave their mark and make traditional education not just a luxury but a dead end. These authors understand that youth can make decisions as rational actors and conclude that what Naison calls “gravitating to the underground economy” offers tangible rewards, while “schooling from above” and non-stop testing

in the absence of jobs can have — with the rarest exceptions — no positive effect on their lives.

With a new school year just around the corner, we are fortunate to have educators like Vilson and Naison who understand deeply the reality of struggling urban schools. Their writing can help us see beyond the cookie-cutter solutions of the corporate school reformers to the more difficult path of transforming our public schools one student at a time.

— MICHAEL HIRSCH

The Power of Queer Books

By JESSICA MAX STEIN

I first suspected I was queer when a friend gave me a copy of Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, and I was both



DRAMA IN A BOX: Victoria Baker's diorama of *Rubyfruit Jungle*.

shocked and turned on by its content. Similarly, for writers Sasfras Lowrey and Hugh Ryan, curators of the “Queer Book Diorama Show” at Manhattan's beautiful Jefferson Market Library, LGBT literature was essential to the process of establishing their queer identities.

The latest offering from the transgressively transient Pop-Up Museum of Queer History, “Queer Book Diorama Show” showcases 11 charming dioramas paying tribute to classic LGBT books such as Ann Bannon's *Beebo Brinker Chronicles* and Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, as well as quirkier selections such as Munro Leaf's *The Story of Ferdinand* and Christina Crawford's *Mommy Dearest*.

My beloved *Rubyfruit Jungle* merits not one but two dioramas: Kate Conroy's thoughtful mashup of it and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and

Victoria Baker's fantastically detailed depiction of nearly the entire book using over 50 clothespin figurines, featuring among them protagonist Molly Bolt wielding a grapefruit.

The diorama format is a particularly apt one for queer literature, as the viewer peers through a hole in the deceptively simple cardboard casing for daniel lang/levitsky's diorama on Samuel R. Delaney's *Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stone* to glimpse its nuanced, glittering interior; or looks through the cutout glasses in Jenny Lin's treatment of Jack Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*, literally seeing the book through her eyes.

The Jefferson Market Library is worth checking out on its own; once a courthouse, it stands next to the former site of a women's prison that housed the likes of Angela Davis, and the castle-like edifice has been transformed into

a library and garden. The show builds on the history of the building, and of course of Greenwich Village, to bring a queer flair to an already special location.

Participating artists are largely based in the New York area, but some have also come from Toronto, Montreal and South Africa. Writes Ryan, “In our own small way, this show is a gift to the community and an offering to all other queers who like us stood before a card catalogue or library shelf looking for belonging.” And it looks like the offering is being embraced: of the 120 or so attendees of the show's August 1 opening, 17 signed up for library cards!

“Queer Book Diorama Show” runs through mid-September at the Jefferson Market Library, 425 6th Avenue.



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